

# STUDIEN ZUM NEUEN TESTAMENT UND SEINER UMWELT (SNTU)

Serie A, Band 33

Herausgegeben von DDr. Albert Fuchs  
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Gedruckt mit Förderung des Bundesministeriums für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur in Wien

Bestelladresse: Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt  
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The Temple, Aramaic, and Mark's Jesus

Recent studies of Jesus have shown with increasingly clarity that he was not opposed to ritual as such, as was often assumed in the past under the influence of the Protestant Reformation.<sup>1</sup> By itself, this sea change in the study of Jesus should signal a willingness to return to Mark's presentation in regard to ritual, particularly in the scene set in the Temple Mark 11:11-25), commonly but mistakenly called the "Cleansing of the Temple." But even a sequential reading of Mark would have led to that conclusion;<sup>2</sup> by this time in Mark's narrative, Jesus has already cleansed the "leper" (1:44), sensed the touch of a woman with hemorrhage (5:30), and articulated a *halakhah* concerning the direction in which defilement flows (7:15). Although Mark is written at some distance from Judaism, both geographically and culturally (see Mark 7:3-4), the Markan Jesus nonetheless engages categorically in ritual and cultic questions, and never more decisively than in Mark 11:11-25.

In what follows, the text of Mark (here translated afresh) will be placed in the context of Judaic texts that address the same or cognate issues. The purpose here is not to set out "parallels" in the old sense, where claims of causation and borrowing were

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<sup>1</sup> Key contributions include Samuel Sandmel, *A Jewish Understanding of the New Testament* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1956); S.G.F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots. A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1967); David Flusser, *Jesus* (tr. Ronald Walls; New York: Herder, 1969); Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew. An Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (London: Collins, 1973); Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979); Bruce Chilton, *A Galilean Rabbi and his Bible. Jesus' Own Interpretation of Isaiah* (London: SPCK, 1984); E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985); John Meier, *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1991-); Paula Fredricksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity* (New York: Knopf, 1999); Bruce Chilton, *Rabbi Jesus. An Intimate Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> See Roger P. Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity. Tradition and Legal History in Mark 7: JSNTS 13* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1986); Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus. His Sacrificial Program Within a Cultural History of Sacrifice* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992); Thomas Kazen, *Jesus and purity Halakhah. Was Jesus indifferent to impurity?* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2002).

involved (diametrically opposite to the meaning of the term "parallel" in geometry).<sup>3</sup> The initial purpose is rather to show that, contextually, the Markan text operates within categories and references also instanced in Judaic literature. Once that has been shown, our next purposes will be to explain some historical issues involved (II) and then to isolate an Aramaic source within Mark (III).

#### I) Mark 11:11-25 within Judaic Contexts<sup>4</sup>

<sup>11</sup> And they enter into Jerusalem, to the sacred space, and he glared around at everything; it being already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve. <sup>12</sup> Next day they came out from Bethany, and he hungered. <sup>13</sup> He saw a fig tree from a distance with leaves and came, in case he could find something on it, and when he had come to it he found nothing except the leaves, because it was not the time of figs. <sup>14</sup> He responded and said to it, No one any longer -- ever -- shall eat fruit from you. And his students heard. <sup>15</sup> And they come into Jerusalem. He entered into the sacred space and began to throw out those selling and those buying in the sacred space, and the tables of the exchangers and the seats of the pigeon-sellers he turned over. <sup>16</sup> And he did not let anyone to carry a vessel through the sacred space. <sup>17</sup> And he was teaching and saying, Is it not written that: my house shall be called a house of prayer for all the Gentiles? But you have made it a thugs' cave. <sup>18</sup> And the high priests and the letterers heard, and sought how they could destroy him, because they feared him, because all the crowd were overwhelmed at his teaching. <sup>19</sup> And when it had become evening, they proceeded out, outside of the city. <sup>20</sup> They proceeded along early and saw the fig tree, shriveled up from roots. <sup>21</sup> Rock remembered and says to him, Rabbi, see: the fig tree which you damned shriveled up. <sup>22</sup> Jesus replied and says to him, Have God's faith. <sup>23</sup> Amen I say to you that whoever says to this mountain, be lifted and thrown into the sea, and does not doubt in one's heart but believes that who one speaks happens, it will

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<sup>3</sup> See the discussion of this issue in Chilton, "Reference to the Targumim in the Exegesis of the New Testament," *Society of Biblical Literature: 1995 Seminar Papers* (ed. L. H. Lovering; Atlanta: Scholars, 1995) 77-82.

<sup>4</sup> This material is taken from a forthcoming volume, *The Synoptic Gospels in their Judaic Contexts. According to Mark*, which is to be published by E. J. Brill. As General Editor, I am grateful to my colleagues in the project, Daniel Gurnter, Jacob Neusner, Daniel Oden, and Lawrence Schiffman.

be to him. <sup>24</sup> For this reason I say to you, Everything -- whatever you pray for and implore -- believe that you have received, and it will be to you. <sup>25</sup> And whenever you stand praying, release if you have anything against someone, so that your father who is in the heavens will also release your transgressions for you.

Ex 30:11-16; Is 56:7; Jer 7:11; Neh 10:33-34; Pro 27:18

### Caiaphas family tomb

In 1990, a bulldozer took the top off a cave 1.5 miles south of Mt. Zion, uncovering a mausoleum. An adult, even a short adult, could not have stood erect in the cave, but a pit had been dug near its entrance to allow mourners to stand while tending to their dead and praying. Corpses were laid out on a shelf, and after the flesh had decomposed, the bones were gathered and stored. Bone-storage for the anonymous poor was in a pit dug in the cave's floor, while the bones of wealthy, prominent people were kept in small limestone ossuaries which were placed in the shafts that ran outward from the central cave like spokes. One such ossuary had the name "Caiaphas" carved roughly into its sides, once in Aramaic and one in Hebrew. A coin discovered in the cave is dated CE 42/43 (during the reign of Herod Agrippa I). If the ossuary were for Caiaphas the high priest, he would have been about 60 when he died (c. 46): and, inside the ossuary marked with Caiaphas' name, the bones of a man aged around 60 years old were indeed found, along with the bones of an adult female, two infants, a small child and a young adult. Death apparently came to them all from natural causes. The ossuary's elegant carving distinguishes it from most ossuaries of that place and period. It is carved with a pattern of five floral designs, for the most part in spirals, arranged around a central, spiraling flower. The palm design that surrounds the circles on Caiaphas' ossuary picks up a motif in the Temple's decoration. Placed in the tunnel to the south of the cave, his ossuary was in fact oriented to face that Temple. His status, and his connection to the Temple, the preeminent sacred place in Judaism, is attested by this find.

Philo, *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres* Sit 186

And was not the consecrated didrachmon portioned out on the same principle? We are meant to consecrate one half of it, the drachma, and pay it as ransom for our own soul, which God who alone is truly free and a giver of freedom releases with a mighty hand from the cruel and bitter tyranny of passions and wrongdoings, if we supplicate him, sometimes too without our supplication. The other half we are to leave to the unfree and slavish kind of which he is a member, who says, I have come to love my master, that is, The mind which rules within me, and my wife, that is Sense, the friend and keeper of the passion's household, And the children, that is: the evil offspring of the passions...

Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus* 1.14

The revenues of the Temple are derived not only from landed estates but also from other and far greater sources which time will never destroy. For as long as the human race endures, and it will endure forever, the revenues of the Temple also will remain secure co-eternal with the whole universe. For it is ordained that everyone, beginning at his twentieth year, should make an annual contribution of first-fruits. These contributions are called "ransom money," and therefore the first-fruits are given with the utmost zeal. The donors bring them cheerfully and gladly, expecting that the payment will give them release from slavery or healing of diseases and the enjoyment of liberty fully secured and also complete preservation from danger. As the nation is very populous, the offerings of first-fruits are naturally exceedingly abundant. In fact, practically in every city there are banking places for the holy money where people regularly come and give their offerings. And at stated times there are appointed to carry the sacred tribute envoys selected on their merits, from every city those of the highest repute, under whose conduct the hopes of each and all will travel safely. For it is on these first-fruits, as prescribed by the law, that the hopes of the pious rest.

Josephus, *War* 7 § 218

On all the Jews, wherever resident, he [Caesar] imposed a poll tax of two drachms, to be paid annually into the Capitol as formerly contributed by them to the Temple at Jerusalem. Such was the position of Jewish affairs at this date.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 3 §§194-196

As for the surplus of the materials provided for the furniture of the tabernacle, all these Moses ordered to be devoted to making protective coverings for the tabernacle itself, for the candelabrum, for the altar of incense, and for the other vessels, in order that these should suffer no injury on the march, whether from rain or dust. Then, assembling the people again, he imposed on them a contribution of half a shekel for each man, the shekel being a Hebrew coin equivalent for four Attic drachmas. They promptly obeyed this behest of Moses and the number of contributors amounted to 605,550, the money being brought by all free men aged from twenty years up to fifty. The sum thus collected was expended upon the needs of the tabernacle.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 13 §§ 372-73

As for Alexander, his own people revolted against him—for the nation was aroused against him—at the celebration of the festival, and as he stood beside the altar and was about to sacrifice, they pelted him with citrons, it being a custom among the Jews that at the festival of Tabernacles everyone holds wands made of palm branches and citrons—these we have described elsewhere; and they added insult to injury by saying that he was descended from captives and was unfit to hold office and to sacrifice; and being enraged at this, he killed some six thousand of them, and also placed a wooden barrier about the altar and the temple as far as the coping (of the court) which the priests alone were permitted to enter, and by this means blocked the people's way to him.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 14 § 110

But no one need wonder that there was so much wealth in our temple, for all the Jews throughout the habitable world, and those who worshipped God, even those from Asia and Europe, had been contributing to it for a very long time.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 17 §§ 149-67 (cf. *Jewish War* 1 §§ 648-655)

Judas, the son of Sariphaeus, and Matthias, the son of Margalothus, were most learned of the Jews and unrivalled interpreters of the ancestral laws, and men especially



dear to the people because they educated the youth, for all those who made an effort to acquire virtue used to spend time with them day after day. When these scholars learned that the king's illness could not be cured, they aroused the youth by telling them that they should pull down all the works built by the king in violation of the laws of their fathers and so obtain from the Law the reward of their pious efforts. It was indeed because of his audacity in making these things in disregard of the Law's provisions, they said, that all those misfortunes, with which he had become familiar to a degree uncommon among mankind, had happened to him, in particular his illness. Now Herod had set about doing certain things that were contrary to the Law, and for these he had been reproached by Judas and Matthias and their followers. For the king had erected over the great gate of the Temple, as a votive offering and at great cost, a great golden eagle, although the Law forbids those who propose to live in accordance with it to think of setting up images or to make dedications of (the likenesses of) any living creatures. So these scholars ordered (their disciples) to pull the eagle down, saying that even if there should be some danger of their being doomed to death, still to those about to die for the preservation and safeguarding of their fathers' way of life the virtue acquired by them in death would seem far more advantageous than the pleasure of living. For by winning eternal fame and glory for themselves they would be praised by those now living and would leave the ever-memorable (example of their) lives to future generations. Moreover, they said, even those who live without danger cannot escape the misfortune (of death), so that those who strive for virtue do well to accept their fate with praise and honor when they depart this life. For it makes death much easier when we court danger for a noble cause, and at the same time we obtain for our sons and whatever relatives, men or women, survive us the benefit of the glory which is thereby acquired. With such words, then, did they stir the youth, and when a rumor reached them that the king had died, it only made the scholars' words more effective. At mid-day, therefore, the youths went up (to the roof of the Temple) and pulled down the eagle and cut it up with axes before the many people who were gathered in the Temple. And the officer of the king — for the attempt had been reported to him -- suspecting that something more serious was involved than what was being done, came up with a force large enough to meet the crowd of men who were intent upon pulling down the image that had been set up. Upon these he fell unexpectedly, for, as is usual with a crowd, they had taken this daring step on a foolish whim rather than with the caution of foresight, and were therefore in disorder, not having looked around beforehand for a

way to help themselves. He seized no fewer than forty of the young men, who had courageously awaited his attack while the rest of the multitude took to flight, and he also captured Judas and Matthias, the instigators of the daring deed, who thought it inglorious to give way on his approach, and he led them to the king. When they came to him, the king asked whether they had dared to pull down the offering he had set up, and they replied, Yes, but the thoughts that we have thought and the deeds that we have done had the highest degree of manly excellence. For we have come to the aid of a cause entrusted to us by God because he thought us worthy, and of deep concern to us who obey the Law. Nor is it at all surprising if we believe that it is less important to observe your decrees than the laws that Moses wrote as God prompted and taught him, and left behind. And with pleasure we will endure death or whatever punishment you may inflict on us because we shall be conscious that death walks with us not because of any wrongdoing on our part but because of our devotion to piety. They all spoke in this way and showed no less daring in their speech than when they had been undeterred in carrying out their bold deed. Thereupon the king had them bound and sent to Jericho, where he summoned the Jewish officials, and when they arrived, he assembled them in the amphitheater, and lying on a couch because of his inability to stand, he recounted all his strenuous efforts on their behalf, and told them at what great expense to himself he had constructed the Temple, whereas the Hasmonaeans had been unable to do anything so great for the honor of God in the hundred and twenty-five years of their reign. He had also, he said, adorned (the Temple) with notable dedicatory offerings, and for these reasons he cherished the hope that even after his death he would leave behind a memorial of himself and an illustrious name. At this point he began to shout that even while he was alive, they had not hesitated to insult him but in broad daylight and in view of the populace had insultingly laid hands on the offering set up by him and succeeded in pulling it down; this was supposedly an insult to him but in actual fact was sacrilege, if one closely examined their actions. Because of his savage state and out of fear that in his fury he might avenge himself upon them, those present said that these things had been done without their consent, and it seemed to them that the perpetrators should not be exempted from punishment. Herod therefore dealt rather mildly with these others but removed the high priest Matthias from his priestly office as being partly to blame for what had happened, and in his stead appointed his wife's brother Joazar as high priest. Now it happened during this Matthias' term as high priest that another high priest was appointed for a single day — that which the Jews observe

as a fast — for the following reason. While serving as priest during the night preceding the day on which the fast occurred, Matthias seemed in a dream to have intercourse with a woman, and since he was unable to serve as priest because of that experience, a relative of his, Joseph, the son of Ellemus, served as priest in his place. Herod then deposed Matthias from the high priesthood. As for the other Matthias, who had stirred up the sedition, he burnt him alive along with some of his companions. And on that same night there was an eclipse of the moon.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 18 §§ 312-313

There is also a city Nisei situated on the same bend of the river. The Jews, in consequence, trusting to their natural strength of these places, used to deposit there the two-drachma coins that it is the national custom for all to contribute to the cause of God, as well as any other dedicatory offerings. Thus these cities were their bank of deposit. From there these offerings were sent to Jerusalem at the appropriate time. Many tens of thousands of Jews shared in the convoy of these monies because they feared the raids of the Parthians, to whom Babylonia was subject.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 20 §§ 179-81

At this time King Agrippa conferred the high priesthood upon Ishmael, the son of Phabi. There now was enkindled mutual enmity and class warfare between the high priests, on the one hand, and the priests and the leaders of the populace of Jerusalem, on the other. Each of the factions formed and collected for itself a band of the most reckless revolutionaries and acted as their leader. And when they clashed they used abusive language and pelted each other with stones. And there was not even one person to rebuke them. No, it was as if there was no one in charge of the city, so that they acted as they did with full license. Such was the shamelessness and effrontery which possessed the high priests that they actually were so brazen as to send slaves to the threshing floors to receive the tithes that were due to the priests, with the result that the poorer priests starved to death. Thus did the violence of the contending factions suppress all justice.

Testament of Moses 5:2-6

...then they themselves will be divided as to the truth. Consequently the word was fulfilled that they will avoid justice and approach iniquity; and they will pollute the house of their worship with the customs of the nations; and they will play the harlot after foreign gods. For they will not follow the truth of God, but certain of them will pollute the high altar by ....the offerings that they place before the Lord. They are not priests, but slaves, indeed sons of slaves. For those who are the leaders, their teachers, in those times will become admirers of avaricious persons, accepting (polluted) offerings, and they will sell justice by accepting bribes. Therefore, their city and the full extent of their dwelling places will be filled with crimes and iniquities. For they will have in their midst judges who will act with impiety toward the Lord and will judge just as they please.

## 2 Baruch 10:18

You, priests, take the keys of the sanctuary, and cast them to the highest heaven, and give them to the Lord and say, Guard your house yourself, because, behold, we have been found to be false stewards.

## Mishnah tractate Middot 2:3

Inside it [the Temple mount, surrounding the inner area which contained the women's court and the Temple court] is a latticed railing, ten handbreadths high. There were thirteen breaches in it, which the kings of Greece opened up.

## Inscription from balustrade around the sanctuary

No foreigner may proceed within the balustrade around the sanctuary and enclosure. Whoever is caught will be responsible for the death that follows.

## Josephus, *War* 5 §§ 193-4 (cf. *Antiquities* 15 § 417)

Continuing across (the open court) to the second sanctuary a stone balustrade was put up, three cubits high, all elegantly worked, in which stood at equal intervals stelae warning of the law of purity, some in Greek and some in Roman letters, that no foreigner should enter into the holy place.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 6 § 125-6 (quoting Titus)

Was it anyone but you, defiled men, who put up this balustrade before the holy places? Did you not place stelae in it, inscribed in Greek letters and your own, to proclaim no one could transgress the parapet? And didn't we permit you to execute transgressors, even if he was Roman?

Josephus, *The Jewish War* 5 § 504-5

He (Titus) enclosed the mount as far as the rock called Dovecote.

Mishnah tractate Sheqalim 1:3

On the fifteenth of that same month [Adar] they set up moneychangers' tables in the provinces. On the twenty-fifth [of Adar] they set them up in the Temple. Once they were set up in the Temple, they began to exact pledges [from those who had not paid the tax in specie]. From whom do they exact a pledge? Levites, Israelites, proselytes, and freed slaves, but not from women, slaves, and minors.

Mishnah tractate Sheqalim 3:3

A member of the household of Rabban Gamaliel would go in and take his sheqel between his fingertips and throw it in front of the one who takes up the heave offering [of the sheqels, so as to make sure his coin would be used for the purchase of the public sacrifices]. And the one who takes up the heave offering intentionally pushes it into the basket. The one who takes up the heave offering does not do so until he says to them, Shall I take up the heave offering? And they say to him, Take up heave offering, take up heave offering, take up heave offering -- three times.

Mishnah tractate Sheqalim 5:3-4 (see also 6:5, cited under Mark 12:38-44) Four seals were in the Temple. And on them was inscribed the following: calf, ram, kid, sinner. Ben Azzai says, There were five, and they were written in Aramaic: Calf, ram, kid, poor sinner [Leviticus. 14:21], and rich sinner [Leviticus 14:10]. "Calf" signifies drink offerings for [offerings from] the herd, large or small, male or female. "Kid" signifies drink offerings of the flock, whether large or small, male or female, except for

those that accompany rams. "Ram" signifies drink offerings that come with rams alone; "Sinner" signifies drink offerings that come with the three beasts of those afflicted by skin disease. He who wanted [to purchase] drink offerings goes over to Yohanan, who is appointed to be in charge of the seals.

Tosefta Sheqalim 1:6

They exact pledges from Israelites for their sheqels, so that the public offerings might be made of their [funds]. This is like a man who got a sore on his foot, and the doctor had to force it and cut off his flesh so as to heal him. Thus did the Holy One, blessed be he, exact a pledge from Israelites for the payment of their sheqels, so that the public offerings might be made of their [funds]. For public offerings appease and effect atonement between Israel and their father in heaven. Likewise we find of the heave offering of sheqels which the Israelites paid in the wilderness, as it is said, And you shall take the atonement money from the people of Israel land shall appoint it for the service of the tent of meeting; that it may bring the people of Israel to remembrance before the Lord, so as to make atonement for yourselves (Exodus 30:16).

Tosefta Hagigah 2:11 (with Yerushalmi tractate Hagigah 2:3; tractate Besa 2:4; Bavli tractate Besa 20a, b)

Hillel the Elder laid on hands on a whole-offering in the courtyard, and the disciples of Shammai ganged up on him. He said to them, Go and see it, for it is a female, and I have to prepare it as sacrifices of peace-offerings. He put them off with a bunch of words, and they went their way. But the power of the House of Shammai forthwith became strong, and they wanted to decide the law permanently in accord with their opinion. Now there was present Baba b. Buta who was one of the disciples of the House of Shammai, but who acknowledged that the law is in accord with the opinions of the House of Hillel in every last detail. He went and brought the whole Qedar-flock and set them up right in the courtyard and announced, Whoever is required to bring whole-offerings and peace-offerings--let him come and take a beast and lay on hands. So [everybody] came along and took a beast and offering up whole offerings, having laid on hands. On that very day the law was confirmed in accord with the opinion of the House of Hillel, and not a single person griped about it.

## Targum Zechariah 14:21b

and there shall never again be a *trader* in the *sanctuary* of the Lord of hosts at that *time*.

## Bavli tractate Erubin 54a-b

Said Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba said Rabbi Yohanan, What is the meaning of this verse of Scripture: Whoso keeps the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof (Proverbs 27:18)? How come words of the Torah were compared to a fig? Just as the fig — the more someone examines it, the more one finds in it, so words of the Torah — the more one meditates on them, the more flavor he finds in them.

## Yerushalmi tractate Taanit 7:4

There were two cedars on the Mount of Olives. Under one of them there were four stalls, selling food preserved in a condition of cultic cleanness [to be eaten in Jerusalem]. And from one they would produce forty *seahs'* weight of pigeons a month, and from these they would provide bird offerings for all of Israel.

## Bavli tractate Abodah Zarah 8b (with Shabbat 15a; Sanhedrin 41a)

For Rabbi Kahana said, When Rabbi Ishmael b. Rabbi Yosé fell ill, Rabbi sent word to him, Tell us two or three of the things that you said to us in your father's name. He said to them, One hundred and eighty years before the house of the Temple was destroyed, the wicked kingdom took over the dominion over Israel; eighty years prior to the destruction of the Temple the decree was made that the lands of the peoples around the land of Israel and utensils made out of glass were subject to uncleanness; forty years prior to the destruction of the Temple the Sanhedrin went out into exile from the Temple and held its sessions in a stall [on the Temple mount].

## II) Historical Issues involved in Jesus' Intervention in the Temple

Once Judaic contexts are discerned, which are resonant with the description of Jesus' actions in Mark, a practical question emerges: if the quest for "parallels" has

proved to be an exercise in apologetics, what counsel for using contextual materials can be offered apart from ignoring them?<sup>5</sup> At just this point, a greater awareness of the nature of comparison needs to be developed. The critical task begins, not with alleging contacts among literatures, but with the observations of analogies. Analogies between the Gospels and Judaic literature might be of four types, which may be illustrated by means of examples drawn from the section of Mark from which our pericope is taken. Variation in type depends upon whether a case is a product of (1) systemic similarity (for example, reference to the kingdom which is to be Israel's, see Mark 11:10 and Targum Zechariah 14:9), (2) literary affinity (see the vineyard parable in Mark 12:1-12 and Isaiah 5:1-7), (3) common reference (to the Temple, as in the many passages above, for instance), or (4) direct borrowing (as in the teaching that love of neighbor as fulfills the Torah; Mark 12:29-31; Bavli tractate Shabbat 31a). Of these four ways in which the Gospels may relate to their Judaic contexts, that of common reference, specifically to institutions and practices and disturbances in the Temple, appears the most relevant in this case. But careful attention sometimes reveals that Mark is not grounded historically in its received text. In particular, the Gospel makes the half-shekel tax, which was widely known throughout the Diaspora, into Jesus' central concern in the Temple, and that turns out to be implausible. The half-shekel was required of all Israelite males and accepted from all Israelite females to pay for the daily whole-offerings, morning and night, that atoned for the corporate sins of the

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<sup>5</sup> See Elias J. Bickerman, "The Warning Inscriptions of Herod's Temple," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 37.4 (1947) 387-405; Cecil Roth, "The Cleansing of the Temple and Zechariah xiv 21," *Novum Testamentum* 4 (1960) 174-181; Victor Eppstein, "The Historicity of the Gospel Account of the Cleansing of the Temple," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 55 (1964) 42-58; Benjamin Mazar, *The Mountain of the Lord* (tr. G. Cornfield; Garden City: Doubleday, 1975); E. M. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule* (SJLA 20; Leiden: Brill, 1976); S. Freyne (*Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian* [Wilmington: Glazier, 1980] 277-81); W. Horbury, "The Temple Tax," in E. Bammel and C.F.D. Moule (eds.), *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* (Cambridge University Press, 1984) 265-86; Marcia L. Colish in *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages. I. Stoicism in Classical Latin Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1990); Zvi Greenhut, "Discovery of the Caiaphas Family Tomb," *Jerusalem Perspective* 4.5-6 (1991) 6-12; Bruce Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus. His Sacrificial Program Within a Cultural History of Sacrifice* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992); Craig A. Evans, "Jesus and the 'Cave of Robbers': Towards a Jewish Context for the Temple Action," in Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies* (AGJU 25; Leiden: Brill, 1995) 345-65.



Israelite community (Exodus 30:11-16; Nehemiah 10:33-34; Mishnah tractate Sheqalim 1:3; Tosefta Sheqalim 1:6). Everyone was equal; all bore responsibility for the community's inadvertent sins and participated in the public rites of atonement by helping to support the offerings. Moneychangers for the payment of the half-sheqel played an integral role in the atonement rite in behalf of the entire community of Israel throughout the world. They took the coins brought by pilgrims and changed them into the half-sheqel that every Israelite male owed for the maintenance of the daily whole offerings that were presented in behalf of Israel for the forgiveness of sin. There was no evident reason to drive them out of the Temple court: so understood, the action lies beyond all comprehension. In throwing out those buying and selling, Jesus would have disrupted the holy offerings and treated the rites as null, in direct contradiction to the esteem for them reflected in Philo and Josephus, for example. Although disputes concerning how the offerings were to be made were well known (Mishnah tractate Sheqalim 3:3), as presented by Mark Jesus' action appears surreal.

Moreover, because the operation of changing money began in the provinces before Jerusalem was involved (Mishnah Sheqalim 1:3), intervening in the Temple would not have prevented the collection of the half-shekel. Cicero devoted himself to the defense of a client in 59 B.C.E. (*Pro Flacco*) who had plundered a synagogue where the tax was collected in the Diaspora. Mark in its received form may have such an attack on Judaism in mind, and would clearly have been understood to refer to the collection of the half-shekel by its initial hearers and readers, but to that extent the Gospel does not represent conditions in Jerusalem accurately or plausibly.

Yet if Jesus' action did not target the collection of the half-sheqel in particular, what was its purpose? Alongside the collection of the tax, the Temple also accommodated a system for exchanging seals or tokens (Mishnah Sheqalim 5:3-4). To the extent, the setting of the action in Mark seems plausible, after all.

On the other hand, the location of the vendors of animals themselves was usually on the Mount of Olives (Josephus, *The Jewish War* 5 § 504-5; Yerushalmi tractate Taanit 7:4), and the assumption of Mishnah tractate Sheqalim itself is that offerings were not directly available in the Great Court of the Temple (Mishnah Sheqalim 5:3-4). An arrangement in which they were actually sited in the Great Court would have been

controversial, and Mark makes that part of Caiaphas' innovations c. 30 C.E., the counterpart of exiling the Sanhedrin from the Temple to Hanuth, the word for market stall in Aramaic (Abodah Zarah 8b). Jesus, however, is depicted as protesting the new siting of the animals, rather than the exile of the Sanhedrin, which is the concern of the Talmud.

His protest is depicted as mounted in prophetic terms (Isaiah 56:7; Jeremiah 7:11) and incorporates the symbolism of the fig (Proverbs 27:18; Bavli tractate Erubin 54a-b). The use of force, but not in an overt attack on the Temple (such as Josephus describes), is preceded in Tosefta Hagigah 2:11. The last chapter of the Targum Zechariah predicts that God's Kingdom will be manifested over the entire earth when the offerings of Sukkoth, not those of Passover, are presented both by Israelites and non-Jews at the Temple. It further predicts that these worshippers will prepare and offer their sacrifices themselves without the intervention of middlemen (Targum Zechariah 14:21).

The thematic connection with the festival of Sukkot, analyzed by T.W. Manson,<sup>6</sup> comes out in the biblical passages at issue in Mark 11:1-10 (Zechariah 9:9; Psalm 118:25-26). The issue of the expropriation of the animal (Mishnah tractate Baba Mesia 6:5) is addressed by means of Zechariah's teaching of eschatological exceptions at the festival of Sukkot, a motif taken up in Midrash Rabbah Genesis 75.6. The gesture with the garments, however, need not be seen as purely messianic or eschatological (2 Kings 9:12; Bavli tractate Ketubot 66b-67a; 1 Maccabees 13:51). In the course of describing festivities, the Mishnah relates (tractate Sukkot 3:1-4:9) that attendants used to scatter lulabs for people to collect as they would, but that led to people fighting over them and even hitting one another with lulabs, until that practice was stopped. The thrust of the Sukkoth expectation articulated in Zechariah brought on the dramatic confrontation

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<sup>6</sup> T. W. Manson, "The Cleansing of the Temple," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 33 (1951) 271-282; J. L. Rubenstein, "Sukkot, Eschatology and Zechariah 14," *Revue Biblique* 103 (1996) 161-195; Håkan Ulfgard, *The Story of Sukkot. The Setting, Shaping, and Sequel of the Biblical Feast of Tabernacles: Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese* 34 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998); Bruce Chilton, *Redeeming Time. The Wisdom of Ancient Jewish and Christian Festal Calendars* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002).

that Jesus provoked in the Temple, and Mark preserves the recollection of the circumstances beneath the surface of the text.

### III Aramaic Epigraphy and Retroversion

The scene of Jesus' intervention in Mark shows signs of influence by a source. The chronological discrepancy between the received text's paschal setting and the setting of Sukkoth within the sources (also intimated in Mark 14:1-2) joins another indication to this effect: the direct appearance of Peter in v. 21 suggests the ultimate source of this complex of material, which interfaces well with Judaic tradition, once the application of the action to the collection of the half-shekel is acknowledged as a mistake.

For the source of the story to be retroverted into Aramaic convincingly, however, several conditions need to be met. First, the usage of Aramaic in connection with the Temple would need to be established. Second, samples of the language from the period of Jesus would need to be extant. Third and finally, retroversion would need to account for features of the Greek text that otherwise appear odd.

#### 1. Usage of Aramaic in Connection with the Temple

Aramaic inscriptions in the Temple are attested in Sheqalim 5:3-4 and *Antiquities* 6 § 125-6. In addition, the Caiaphas ossuary – whatever one's judgment in regard to its connection the high priest named in Mark – shows that Aramaic was an ambient language in Jerusalem, and specifically in connection with the Temple.

#### 2. First Century Judean Aramaic

Although discoveries near Qumran, among the Dead Sea Scrolls, prove the usage of Aramaic there, and evidence the usage of the language during the first century, in fact extant texts were also found elsewhere in Judea, which are easily available in well-edited collections.<sup>7</sup> The usage of first-century Judean Aramaic for purposes of

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<sup>7</sup> See Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Daniel J. Harrington, *A Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts: Biblica et Orientalia* 34 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978); Klaus Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer samt den Inschriften aus Palästina, dem Testament Levis aus der Kairoer*

retroversion, rather than later forms of the language, is vital, as Maurice Casey has been quite right to stress that in his recent exercise in retroversion. Casey observes that the supposition that Jesus taught in Greek panders to the "fundamentalist's dream, and uncritical assumptions are required to carry it through."<sup>8</sup> One might add that it also plays into the speculation of the "Jesus Seminar," which proved quite as philo-Hellenic as the Fundamentalists whom the Seminar stridently criticized.

Another form of linguistic red herring comes from the study of the Targumim. A particular obstacle is posed for modern study by the persistent notion that there is somewhere extant today a "Palestinian Targum" that substantially represents the understanding of the Hebrew Bible in the time of Jesus, and in exactly his language. There was a time when that was a comprehensible position, because documents in what was called "Palestinian Aramaic" were thought to be more ancient than those in "Babylonian Aramaic." That is one good reason for speaking more accurately of "Tiberian" or "Galilean" Aramaic, rather than of "Palestinian" Aramaic: readers and even scholars tend to conflate any reference to what is ancient and "Palestinian" to what must have existed in the period of Jesus. But the old position runs up against the current understanding of how the Aramaic language developed: the discoveries of Judean Aramaic have cast new light on Onqelos and Jonathan, which makes them appear more ancient than was supposed some sixty years ago, and more similar to Aramaic as spoken in Roman *Syria Palaestina*. Onqelos and Jonathan, insofar as they represent Transitional Aramaic, convey an earlier form of the language than what we find in the Cairo Geniza, Pseudo-Jonathan, and the Fragments Targum (which were called "Palestinian" in now outdated scholarship). To the same extent that the last three Targumim are Tiberian in language, they also represent the later, Regional dialect of Aramaic. Moreover, the present understanding of early Judaism is that it was too variegated to allow of the formation of a single, authoritative tradition of rendering, such as the designation "Palestinian Targum" would suggest. Pseudo-Jonathan appears to represent a much more recent tendency (into the seventh century C.E.), not only in

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*Genisa, der Fastenrolle und den alten talmudischen Zitaten. Aramaistische Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung, Deutung, Grammatik/Wörterbuch, deutsch-aramäische Wortliste, Register* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984-2004).

<sup>8</sup> Maurice Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel*: Society of New Testament Studies Monograph Series 102 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 67.

language, but also in its historical allusions and its form. All of this means, as Fitzmyer has long argued and Casey and I have also observed, that in the wake of the discoveries at Qumran the orientation represented by Paul Kahle, Matthew Black, and after them by Geza Vermes is simply no longer tenable,<sup>9</sup> whether for the study of the Targumim or for the study of the Gospels.

A still less defensible tendency confuses Aramaic of the first century with Syriac, a different form of the language altogether. The approach of George Lamsa,<sup>10</sup> who used the Peshitta Syriac version as an index of replicating Jesus' teaching in Aramaic, has been taken up and popularized by Neil Douglas-Klotz.<sup>11</sup> This approach willfully perpetuates a basic confusion of language, since Aramaic and Syriac come from different centuries and areas (although they are closely related Semitic languages), and is based on uncritical treatment of the Peshitta, a Syriac version of the Gospels. The Gospels in the Peshitta were introduced into Syriac in order to counteract usage of the harmonized *Diatessaron*, and for this purpose these "separated Gospels," as they were called, stuck as closely as possible to the original Greek text of the Gospels. As a result, the Peshitta often introduces Hellenisms into the Syriac, producing exactly the opposite cultural accommodation to what retroversion aims to achieve. The tendency is evident in Douglas-Klotz's very long and baroque additions to the Lord's Prayer, which he claims are translations of Jesus' Aramaic.

Usage of Syriac sources indeed has its place in establishing trajectories of Aramaic usage and of exegetical traditions. In that regard usage of the Old Syriac Gospels,

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<sup>9</sup> See Stephen A. Kaufman, "Languages (Aramaic)," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (edited by David Noel Freedman and others; New York: Doubleday, 1992) 4:173–78.

<sup>10</sup> See, among his many but repetitious publications, *The New Testament from the Ancient Eastern Text. Translations from the Aramaic [sic!] of the Peshitta* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989).

<sup>11</sup> See Lamsa, *The Hidden Gospel. Decoding the spiritual message of the Aramaic Jesus* (Wheaton: Quest Books, Theosophical Publishing, 1999); Douglas-Klotz, *Prayers of the Cosmos. Meditations on the Aramaic words of Jesus translated and with commentary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990)

rather than the Peshitta, is to be recommended.<sup>12</sup> But in any case, the supposition that a Syriac version as it stands represents the Aramaic Jesus spoke and therefore gives his teaching more accurately than the Greek Gospels is tendentious in the extreme. In making use of Syriac sources to help in the task of reconstruction, Casey follows good precedent, although his global preference for the Palestinian Syriac Lectionaries over the Old Syriac Gospels, in terms of the dating of the texts, seems odd; similarly, he cites Talmudic texts, but he does not avail himself of the Targumim systematically. The basic procedure that he recommends nonetheless remains cogent: look for evidence of literal rendering from Aramaic, comparing that to the Aramaic of the Dead Sea Scrolls and later sources. Then translate the material into idiomatic Jewish Aramaic of the first century, bearing in mind the tendencies of the Gospels and Jesus' own setting. Those principles are as straightforward as when they have been expressed in the fundamental work by Klaus Beyer,<sup>13</sup> as well as by Joseph Fitzmyer and myself.

Both the pan-Hellenism of some Fundamentalist scholars and the Jesus Seminar, and the philo-Peshittism of those who would rather copy a derivative Syriac text than set out a critical Aramaic retroversion show why the task of genuine retroversion, difficult thought it is, has become necessary. However much or however little confidence we place in attributing a given teaching to Jesus, an Aramaic teacher in a Judaic setting, if the attribution cannot be shown to be consistent with his language and culture, the result is not only a possible mistake in respect of the given attribution, but a basic distortion of Jesus' entire setting, and therefore of any historical work. Although I needed to learn Aramaic in association with my work on Jesus and the Targum of Isaiah,<sup>14</sup> I initially thought that critical discussion would be better served within exegesis than by discussing principles of retroversion as such. I was slow to realize

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<sup>12</sup> See Chilton, "'Amen': an Approach through Syriac Gospels," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 69 (1978) 203-211 and "Announcement in Nazara: redaction and tradition in Luke 4:16-21," *Gospel Perspectives* 2 (1981) 147-172.

<sup>13</sup> *Semitischen Syntax im Neuen Testament: Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments* 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1962).

<sup>14</sup> *God in Strength. Jesus' announcement of the Kingdom: Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt* 1 (Freistadt: Plöchl, 1979); *The Glory of Israel. The Theology and Provenience of the Isaiah Targum: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement* 23 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1982); *The Isaiah Targum. Introduction, Translation, Apparatus, and Notes: The Aramaic Bible* 11 (Wilmington: Glazier and Edinburgh: Clark, 1987).

that, absent fully critical discussion of the retroversion of Jesus' sayings, uncritical recourse to Greek and the Peshitta would be the result. Prodded by colleagues, in no small measure by Maurice Casey, I then turned to that task in several publications.<sup>15</sup> The result has proven an ongoing project, although I have now completed my retroversion of the Aramaic sources of Mark's through several drafts.<sup>16</sup> In pursuing this line of inquiry, I would like to suggest that, before we retrovert into Aramaic, we should be clear in regard to the Greek to be retroverted, and confident that it reflects an Aramaic source. After that, contrary to the practices of Fitzmyer and Casey, for two reasons we should supply vowels in our retroversions. It is true that we have no pointed texts in Aramaic from the first century, but there are nonetheless texts from that epoch, and those who read them at the time they were written evidently vocalized them as they read them aloud. Some of those vocalizations have left traces, in the shape of the usage of letters for vowels. Although not consistent enough to form a comprehensive system, vowel letters leave the Aramaist with indications of how words were vocalized. When we come to translate Aramaic today, whether we provide pointing or not, Aramaists in fact supply vocalizations, at least mentally; otherwise they could not translate at all. Despite the fact that the pointing of any retroversion must remain suppositious, and be subject to discussion, I think we should let readers know what pointing we suppose as we translate. It is of course true that the pointing of Biblical and first-century, Transitional Aramaic was formalized centuries after the texts were composed (as is the case in Classical Hebrew), yet that work was conducted on the basis of received learning regarding the language which should not be dismissed out of hand, and forms an appropriate basis of analysis of how we should vocalize first-century Aramaic.

My second consideration is that, when we convey retroversions to readers, they are either Aramaists, who will accept or feel a need to adjust our pointing, or non-

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<sup>15</sup> In addition to *Jesus' Prayer and Jesus' Eucharist*, see, for example, *Targumic Approaches to the Gospels. Essays in the Mutual Definition of Judaism and Christianity: Studies in Judaism* (Lanham and London: University Press of America, 1986), 15-23; *A Feast of Meanings. Eucharistic Theologies from Jesus through Johannine Circles: Supplements to Novum Testamentum* 72 (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

<sup>16</sup> I plan to provide the Aramaic retroversions within *The Synoptic Gospels in their Judaic Contexts*, and write a commentary on the retroversion itself, keyed to the sources of Judean Aramaic, at a later stage.

Aramaists, whose interests are exegetical, historical or literary. The first group of readers is better served by having the exegete's vocalization indicated plainly, so that discussion may be explicit. The second group will not have any idea of the sound of the Aramaic unless points are used, and I will suggest in discussing the retroversion that follows that the sound of the prayer matters. In both the instances of experts and non-experts, then, vocalization may responsibly be recommended, provided the limits of certainty are observed. Further, the use of Latin characters, provided it is consistent, poses no obstacle to the Aramaist, while a reader with only a bit of Hebrew or no acquaintance with a Semitic language at all would derive better value from a transliteration than from the use of unvocalized Semitic letters in *Quadratschrift* (itself an artificial convention), and especially when the supralinear system of pointing is used.

For these reasons, in separate works Joseph A. Fitzmyer and I decided to use transliteration in our retroversions of the Lord's Prayer (and presumably Jeremias was similarly motivated).<sup>17</sup> That in turn permits us to be explicit when we differ from Joachim Jeremias, and from one another. I have argued, for example that the gender of the term "debt" in Aramaic changed from the feminine in the first century to masculine at a later stage, on the basis of texts found at Qumran, and in private correspondence Fitzmyer has agreed with my observation. I readily admit that whether the gender of "debt" was masculine or feminine in the time of Jesus in no sense impinged on the meaning of his phrasing as such. But representing the correct gender contributes to a metric structure that only comes out clearly when the Aramaic form of the Prayer is vocalized.

### 3 Aramaic Retroversion and Explanation

Applied to the key saying within the pericope, these principles of retroversion yield an Aramaic text which is rhythmic, and which sheds light on exegesis:

15 V'al/ Yeshu'/ beheyk/la' d'Ela/ha'

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<sup>17</sup> Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*: The Anchor Bible 28A (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983) 901; Chilton, *Jesus Prayer and Jesus' Eucharist. His Personal Practice of Spirituality* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1997) 24-51.



veshary / 'apa/qa' yat mezabeyn/ayya'  
 veyat za/benayya' beheyk/la',  
 veyat paturay/ya' depatura'ay/ya'  
 veyat kursevat/a' demzabeyn/ayya' yat yo/niyn  
 'ahpheyk/.

*Jesus went into the Temple of God  
 And began to throw out the sellers  
 And the buyers in the Temple,  
 And the tables of the tablers  
 And the seats of those selling pigeons  
 he turned.*

In particular, the phrase *paturay/ya' depatura'ay/ya'* ("the tables of the tablers") in v. 15 refers to merchants, as in the final verse of Zechariah. As converted into Greek "the tables of the exchangers," the retroversion explains the assumption of later tridents that exchanges for the half-shekel were involved, and reflects the generative language that led to this misunderstanding. The connection to the following saying then becomes transparent.

<sup>16</sup> Vela' shabaq/ 'a''aba/ra' mid/'am

beheyk/la' <sup>17</sup> vemaleyph/ v'a/mar,  
 La' katiyv/ debeyt/iy beyt tselo/ta'  
 Lekol/ "amemay/ya' yitqerey/?  
 lahen 'antun/ "avadtun/ah  
 ma''ar/ta' degiydu/diyn.

*He did not allow transport of anything  
 In the Temple and was teaching and saying,  
 Is it not written that my house a house of prayer  
 To all the peoples shall be called?  
 Except you have made it  
 A cave of breakers.*

Both Jesus' active interruption of the sacrificial cultus, which naturally followed on his releasing animals and upsetting the arrangement of the seals in the Temple, and his reference to the non-traditional trade as a form of theft, are better explained on the basis of the Aramaic retroversion than on the basis of the received text in Greek.

### Conclusion

The discovery and analysis of Judaeen Aramaic, together with sensitivity to historical issues and the development of the Markan text, permits the isolation of Aramaic sources within Mark, which may be retroverted into their original language.